

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

Fact Sheet

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FOR THE ARTS



THE
BIG
READ

National Museum Library
SERVICES



The National Endowment for the Arts is a public agency dedicated to supporting excellence in the arts, both new and established; bringing the arts to all Americans; and providing leadership in arts education. Established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government, the Arts Endowment is the nation's largest funder of the arts, bringing great art to all 50 states, including rural areas, inner cities, and military bases.

- The National Endowment for the Arts is the largest national funder of the arts in the United States. While the NEA's budget (\$125.6 million for FY 2006) represents less than 1 percent of total arts philanthropy in the U.S., NEA grants have a powerful multiplying effect, with each grant dollar typically generating seven to eight times more money in matching grants. No other federal agency or private organization facilitates nationwide access to exceptional art.
- Since 1965, the National Endowment for the Arts has awarded more than 126,000 grants totaling more than \$4 billion. The NEA has helped bring art to every Congressional district in the United States, including rural areas, inner cities, and military bases. Projects range from artist residencies in schools to museum exhibitions, Internet initiatives, literary fellowships, national tours, international exchanges, theater festivals, design competitions, folk arts and historic preservation, and much more.
- Through direct grants, partnerships, research, and initiatives, the NEA has led efforts to make the arts a part of the core education for all pre-K through grade 12 students and to increase opportunities outside of school settings for additional arts learning.
- The NEA has provided critical seed funds to develop regional theater, opera, ballet, symphony orchestras, museums, and other arts organizations in small and mid-size cities across the country. Some of these regional arts organizations, which received critical early support from the NEA, have developed worldwide acclaim, including Chicago's Steppenwolf Theater Company and Spoleto Festival USA, a performing and visual arts event in Charleston, South Carolina.
- NEA-sponsored research has helped shape the public dialogue on the arts. The 2004 report "Reading at Risk" sounded a warning bell on the decline of literary reading in America. Other studies on creativity and aging, cultural tourism, arts education, and artists in the workforce highlight the significant economic and social impact of the arts in America. In addition to *The Big Read*, the NEA has created national initiatives that offer model programs of artistic merit and national reach:
 - *Operation Homecoming: Writing the Wartime Experience* presented 50 writing workshops to troops at 25 domestic and overseas military installations between April 2004 and July 2005. Published in September 2006 by Random House, *Operation Homecoming: Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Home Front in the Words of U.S. Troops and Their Families* features nearly 100 writings—including journal entries, letters, short stories, and e-mails sent to friends and family from the front.
 - The *NEA Jazz Masters Initiative* celebrates this distinctly American musical tradition through the NEA Jazz Masters Award, a 50-state NEA Jazz Masters tour with performances and educational activities, broadcast programs, and educational resources.
 - *Poetry Out Loud: National Poetry Recitation Contest* encourages the study of great poetry by offering educational materials and a dynamic recitation competition to high schools across the country.
 - *American Masterpieces: Three Centuries of Artistic Genius* is an ambitious program, reaching across all the arts, that will bring the best of America's creative legacy to a broad public in all 50 states.
 - *Shakespeare in American Communities* is the largest tour of Shakespeare in American history, having brought new Shakespeare productions and special in-school programs to more than 1,200 communities, military and civilian, across all 50 states.
- For more information, visit the National Endowment for the Arts Web site at www.arts.gov.